

quicumque by handydandynotebook

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Summary:

The girl just stands awkwardly for a moment. Holds herself nervous almost like Mom, one arm holding the other, eyes blinking rapidly. It's not at all what Max expected from the way her mother always described her.

"I'm Tory. With a 'Y,' not an 'I.'"

"I know. Your name was on the forms."

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Author's Note:

choc full of easter egg porn and wtf timeline crossovers, recidivism is prolly the crackiest crack i've posted on here. buuut since watching ck s3 with the reveal of just how bad tory's mom's health is and how like, the *only* reason she didn't get sentenced for what went down in s2 bc her sick mama n bby bro needed a guardian, like...this idea was picking at my brain.

i have both fandoms tagged this time bc ck canon is more prominently referenced but this *rly* isn't going to make sense if u didn't read recidivism, just hit the back button if that's the case. otherwise u gonna be confused.

The girl just stands awkwardly for a moment. Holds herself nervous almost like Mom, one arm holding the other, eyes blinking rapidly. It's not at all what Max expected from the way her mother always described her.

"I'm Tory. With a 'Y,' not an 'I.'"

"I know. Your name was on the forms."

"Right." She rolls her eyes at herself, huffs through her nose as she takes a seat. "Duh. It's been a really long time since I've had visitors...I've never actually been in this room."

Max studies her up and down, isn't sure what she feels. Nothing particularly good.

"Let's get one thing out of the way, I didn't sign the forms because I want to be your prison pen pal or whatever, like my Mom probably wanted. I just need to know why she keeps getting beat up. She won't

tell me, so maybe you will.”

Tory’s mouth drops a little but she composes quickly and shakes her head, messy brunette tresses slapping her cheeks.

“I don’t know, either.”

Max narrows her eyes. “What do you mean you don’t know? You live with her, you sleep in the same cell every night.”

“Yeah, but we’re not always together. We have different jobs, I go to GED classes.” Tory runs a hand through her hair and Max notices words tattooed on the inside of her wrist. Strike First. Strike Hard. No Mercy.

Max has words inked into her skin too. Friends Don’t Lie. The letters wrap around her ankle, a drunken mistake El talked her into that was almost the Camaro’s old license plate number, which undoubtedly would’ve been a mistake too.

“I know some of the guards mess with her sometimes but they know they’re not supposed to, so they don’t usually leave marks where you can see.”

Max’s stomach instantly forms a ball of ice. “What do you mean?”

There’s a pause. Tory stares at Max for a long moment and then huffs in disbelief.

“Come on, now. Your mom looks like a model, she’s got legs for days.”

No.

No, no, no, Max isn’t hearing this.

“Sorry to be blunt, but it’s simple math. We’re women in cages legally stripped of our rights.” Tory pops her lips, resignation coal dark and hard in her eyes. “What else would happen in here?”

The ice of shock and horror melts into an immediate, all encompassing inferno of rage. Max wants to get up and throw her

chair across the room. She wants to pummel the bricks to dust and sink her teeth into the throats of every scumbag who dared disturb a hair on her mother's head. But she can't.

She can't do anything but sit here and burn in anger too big for bones, stew in silence and bear up under a nausea just as powerful. It's a kind of revulsion she hasn't felt since the last hideous words Neil ever spoke, not spat with venom but startlingly clear and cold and content in their hate. The fury trembles through her and the revulsion has her roiling, and Max maybe goes somewhere else until she feels a touch at her shoulder.

She jolts in her seat. Tory jerks her hand back.

"Look, I'm...maybe I shouldn't have dumped it on you like that. I just figured you knew."

"I didn't. Mom never told me anything like that."

"Uh, if it helps, she didn't tell me, either." Tory shakes her head. "She doesn't talk about it. But I know, y'know?"

"Yeah." Max exhales a weight like chains, forms fists she can't lay anywhere at all, lest she get kicked out. "I guess she hasn't changed much."

"I can't do shit about the guards but I try to take care of her as much as I can, if it helps..." Tory offers a sad, uncomfortable smile that Max scoffs at.

"So if they're not the ones leaving marks and that's true, why the fuck has her face been busted the last three times I've come to see her?"

"She won't tell me that either, okay? I don't know." Tory tosses her hands up. "There's some mean bitches in here but as far as I can tell Susan keeps to herself and the meanest one likes her almost as much as she likes me, so I just don't know. I ask, okay, but she sputters excuses and then she shuts down."

"Okay, great, she *really* hasn't changed at all." Max heaves a sigh of frustration and hangs her head.

"I'll try to stick around her more, okay? Maybe I can see if I can get transferred to laundry. It shouldn't be too hard, I have some pull now since the unstoppable current of our fabulous American justice system swept my big fish back this way."

"...what exactly are you in for?" Max asks, inexplicably curious.

"Pfft, what am I not in here for?" Tory rolls her eyes. "Got sent to juvie on charges to incite violence, assault with a deadly weapon, and attempted murder— which is bullshit, okay, I'm not a killer. But this fucking princess and her parents with their fat pockets. She starts bawling like a little bitch and the next thing you know, her business tycoon mama grizzly's out for my blood while my own mom can barely afford dialysis, let alone a lawyer."

So then there's only one killer at this table and it isn't the girl in khaki.

"I've racked up a couple other charges in here, but if I play my cards right, I should be out before I'm thirty, crossing my fingers for twenty-five...your brother's near twenty-four, right?"

"What?" Max isn't sure she heard correctly.

"Stepbrother, sorry. Do you guys get along?" Tory blinks. "I'm pretty sure my little brother has step-siblings now. I hope they—"

"Billy's dead," Max interrupts, narrowing her eyes even as the knot forms in her throat.

Tory's eyes widen. "Oh...oh my god, does your mom know?"

"Know?" Max echoes incredulously. "She was fucking there— what the— what did she tell you?!"

"Whoa, oh...oh man, I don't wanna be in the middle of this one." Tory sucks in a lungful and swats her hands. "Can we forget I brought it up?"

"No, of course not!" Max squawks, drawing the glower of a guard and pointedly lowering her voice, hissing through her teeth in lieu of yelling. "What the hell?"

“Okay, Susan, uh, she doesn’t talk about him much but she said he was a grad student and don’t— okay, I can tell by your face you’re pissed but like, it’s not that weird. I promise you it’s not that weird.”

“Goddamn, what doesn’t she lie about?” Max puts her hands to her head as her mind reels. “Does she just lie about everything now?”

“It’s not that weird, Max,” Tory repeats and Max realizes this is the first time she’s spoken her name. “Seriously, a lot of people lie about stuff like that in here. I do too, your mom thinks my mom is still alive!”

Max freezes.

“Yeah,” Tory continues, giving a sort, brusque bob of the head as she swallows and her eyes slide to the vending machine. “I told Susan my mom doesn’t visit because she can’t afford to make the distance. And that was true— for the first six months I was here. But then my mom got sicker and she died, and my brother went into foster care. Which all really, really sucks, but locked up in here where nobody really knows you and you’re kinda separated from everything outside, it’s easier to pretend shit that sucks didn’t really happen. That the outside sucks less and like, things and people are okay out there...”

“That’s fucked up,” Max mutters, weary, shaky as her second shock of the day settles in her belly.

“Yeah.” Tory looks back to her and smiles a fragile smile that looks so strange on her decidedly un-fragile face. “Everything’s fucked up.”